

# CHARLESTON

## FIRE DEPARTMENT



### Heating Safety

**Contact:** Community Educator Ryan Kunitzer

**Phone:** 843-958-6401

**E-mail:** [kunitzerr@charleston-sc.gov](mailto:kunitzerr@charleston-sc.gov)

Charleston, SC (November 13, 2013): Colder temperatures are in our immediate forecast and the Charleston Fire Department wants you to stay safe while staying warm. Home fires are more prevalent in cold weather during any other time during the year. This is due in part to an increase in heating and cooking fires.

“Times of colder weather and during winter months bring the highest number of home fires than any other time of the year,” said Community Educator Ryan Kunitzer. “Each winter season, home fires increase in part due to heating and cooking fires. Fire safety and injury prevention must not be lost in an effort to stay warm.”

Consider these tips for the upcoming winter months:

- Furnaces, fireplaces, and chimneys should be routinely cleaned and inspected by a qualified technician.
- Space heaters, furnaces, and fireplaces should not be within 3 feet of any combustibles.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Dispose of fireplace ashes in a metal container and place the container away from combustible construction for 2-3 days before disposal.
- Allow kerosene heaters to cool and remove them to the outdoors before refueling.
- Never use your oven or stove for heating purposes.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning. Remember, carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas.
- Carbon monoxide alarms are NOT a substitute for smoke alarms. Make sure a smoke alarm is on every level of your home, inside and outside of each sleeping areas.

During colder weather, the Charleston Fire Department experiences an increased call volume regarding burning smells and odors. This is often related to dust or debris that may collect in the heating system or “heat strips” within the unit. When the furnace is turned on for a first time it will commonly emit a burning smell. Typically this is not a cause for concern as the heat strips are burning off the dust that has collected over the summer months. Routine preventative maintenance can reduce this occurrence.

If you see or smell smoke, or have any type of emergency, please do not hesitate to dial 9-1-1. If you have any questions on heating safety, please contact Community Educator Ryan Kunitzer at 843-958-6401 or by email at [kunitzerr@charleston-sc.gov](mailto:kunitzerr@charleston-sc.gov).

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